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## SANDY SHREVE

### Marbles

Perhaps it is spring, the air clear, an after-rain morning  
 Friends gather in the street, take for granted the slip  
 of distant ocean scent into their lungs  
 the hint of first green in its chill  
 One among you begins to grind her heel in the dirt  
 tentative at first

It is a casual question, when you crouch  
 for another turn, the edge of your forefinger stained  
 mud embedded in gravel scratches  
*So, what do you want to be*

You remember your father, your mother  
 insisting: anything, anything at all, whatever you want  
 So today you say, *lawyer*, tell your friends  
 one of your aunts thought of it because  
 you are talkative, always arguing, and for some reason  
 this reminds you of your mother saying she can't stand  
 women's voices on the radio  
 how that soprano-sound grates on her nerves

and you can't imagine a day thirty years later  
 when the newspapers you don't read yet  
 will report that women's voices are lower than thirty  
 years ago  
 because of all their new careers  
 Reading that story you will remember

today, your mother working at home  
 you and your friends dreaming up a different future  
 for yourselves while you play marbles  
 in a small Maritime town on the edge of an emptiness  
 when the thought of your mother's dislike makes you  
 think  
 of cheddar cheese, how it ribbons against steel  
 to a shredded pile for the soufflé she makes  
 how its sharp flavour will rise to mysterious heights

Your friends are laughing now, one has already  
*lost all her marbles*, the game barely begun  
 you want her to stay, scoop a handful from you bag

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